

Country Visit: Sweden

Report of the

**Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism,
Rabbi Andrew Baker and the**

**Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and
Discrimination against Muslims, Dr. Bülent Şenay**

September 5-8, 2016

REPORT OF RABBI ANDREW BAKER

I had the occasion to conduct an official Country Visit to Sweden in 2010, as well as a briefer, follow-up visit in 2012. In September 2016 I returned for an official Country Visit to meet with representatives from Stockholm and Malmö. While the general issues of concern about antisemitism in Sweden remain the same, there has been a notable improvement in responding to them, especially in the area of Jewish Community security.

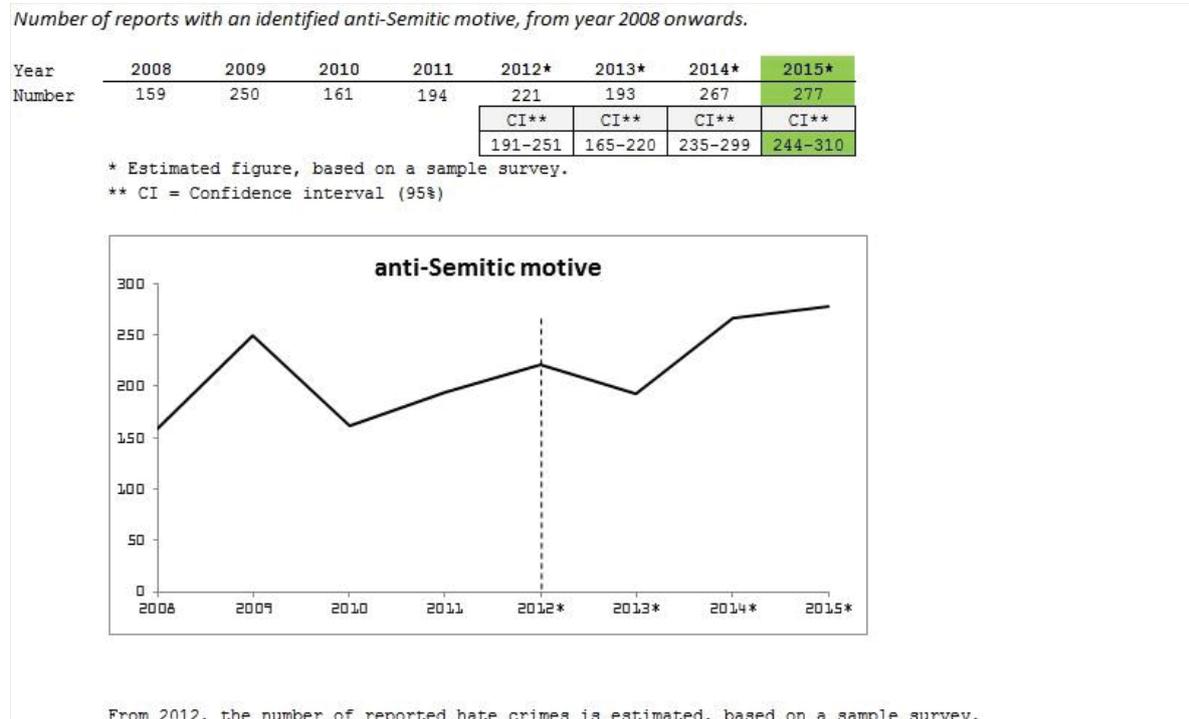
Security Concerns

Terrorist attacks on Jewish targets in recent years, and especially on the synagogue in Copenhagen in 2015, have led the government to ratchet up its security assistance. This has meant additional funding for physical security enhancements on community buildings of 200,000 SEK (approximately €20,000) per building. Previous restrictions on the placement of security cameras have been relaxed, and there is now a notable increase in police presence at vulnerable sites. Community leaders say there is a good channel of communications with senior police officials. Despite this, the Stockholm Jewish Community is still required to divert over 20 percent of its budget toward security expenses. On the occasion of this visit, we met with Jewish Community leaders in its newly-opened school and community center in the center of Stockholm. With school classrooms, organizational offices, a small kosher market, and a café in the building's central atrium, it is a very real symbol of the vibrant, Jewish life that is present today in Sweden. But it was not designed with the current security imperatives in mind, and the community will need to seek additional government support beyond the 200,000 SEK provided in order to properly secure the site.

Significant attention has focused in recent years on the Jewish Community in Malmö, Sweden. The presence of a large, immigrant community and a polarizing, populist mayor together with repeated verbal and physical attacks on the community's rabbi had set the community on edge. Previous reports described a steady flow of Jews—particularly families with young children—leaving the city because of security concerns. However, community leaders today report with satisfaction that government authorities now provide them with funds to support a full-time security officer, and new surveillance cameras have been installed. They also note the prosecution and conviction of one of the attackers of the community rabbi.

Sources of Antisemitism

Four percent of all hate crimes (280 of an estimated 6,980 reports) in 2015, were deemed by the National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÄ) to be anti-Semitic in nature.



This is the highest number recorded in the past eight years by BRÄ. Traditional concerns about antisemitism have always focused on right-wing, populist forces, including neo-Nazi and white power groups. One such extremist group, the Nordic Resistance Movement, rails against “Zionist conspiracies” and is antisemitic at its core. In the political arena, the country has witnessed the steady growth in popular support of the nationalist, Sweden Democrats. While this party is primarily drawing strength from its anti-immigrant stance in the face of large numbers coming to Sweden from conflict areas in the Middle East, it has also included a strong whiff of antisemitism in its ideology. In 2014, Björn Söder, the Party’s Secretary and Second Deputy Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag, told the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* that Jews can’t be truly Swedish unless they assimilate and abandon their religious identity.¹

The Ombudsman Office does not address hate speech issues and focuses primarily on charges of discrimination, which has not been a concern of Swedish Jewry. However, the Deputy Ombudsman did note in his meeting with us that according to one journalist’s report there were some 137 antisemitic crimes in Malmö, but none were brought to court. “The

¹ “Swedish far-right leader: Jews must abandon religious identity to be Swedes.” The Guardian. 17 December 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/17/swedish-far-right-leader-jews-swedes>

mere accusation that nothing is done is problematic,” he said. [One case involving an attack on the community rabbi in that city was recently prosecuted.²]

While civil society leaders credit Prime Minister Stefan Löfven as being sensitive to the problem of antisemitism and Jewish Community concerns, his left-of-center government has also drawn criticism for its antagonistic view of the State of Israel. That anti-Israel animus sometimes crosses over into a form of antisemitism, and it also has a direct impact on the Jewish Community which is frequently conflated with Israel. Under this government Sweden became the first and only European country to officially recognize the State of Palestine. In April 2016, Sweden’s Housing Minister, Mehmet Kaplan, was forced to resign when comments he made prior to his appointment came to light. He was quoted as saying, “Israelis treat Palestinians in a way that is very like that in which Jews were treated by Germany in the 1930s.”³ The outspoken views on Israel of Sweden’s Foreign Minister Margot Wallström—Israeli leaders refused to meet with her on a recent visit to the region—have also contributed to the uncomfortable situation of the Jewish Community in Sweden.

Antisemitism from the left is also a concern. Civil society monitors note that in Sweden human rights advocates generally see their mandate as combating racism in society while ignoring antisemitism as one of its forms. Certain rap musicians, who are often featured at anti-racism events, will themselves include antisemitic lyrics in their songs. There have also been efforts largely generated by children rights advocates to press for further restrictions or a complete ban on child circumcision. Legislation had been enacted by Sweden in 2001, which already restricted this practice, requiring the presence of trained medical professionals with infant boys (the Jewish custom) or requiring hospitalization for older boys (the Muslim practice). The Jewish Community accepted these measures at the time, believing that the issue was thus settled. As ritual circumcision (*Brit Milah* in Hebrew) for all male offspring is observed by the vast majority of Jews in Sweden and elsewhere, banning the practice would have a significant impact on the future of Jewish life in the country.

As in a number of other European countries, elements of Sweden’s Muslim community are also considered to be an additional source of antisemitism, although specific data on this is lacking. BRÅ does not currently collect information on suspected perpetrators noting the “data quality” problem. However, its representative did say that with additional resources it would be possible to go into this aspect in greater depth. The Living History Forum which does conduct attitude surveys of the secondary school population has found in its 2013 survey that while most have an “ambivalent attitude toward Jews, some 20 percent of this group hold negative attitudes.” However, the report goes on to say that, “...among students who stated that they belonged to Islamic faith communities, there is a more negative attitude towards Jews.”⁴ The war in Syria led to large numbers of refugees coming to Europe,

² “Efter mängder av anmälningar: Nu döms en 18-åring för hatbrott mot Malmös rabbin.” Sydsvenskan. 31 May 2016. <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/2016-05-31/efter-mangder-av-anmalningar-nu-doms-en-18-aring-for-hatbrott-mot-rabbinen>

³ Dellling, Hannes and Stiernstedt, Jenny. “SvD avslöjar: Se tv-klippet där Kaplan jämför israeler med nazister.” 17 April 2016. <http://www.svd.se/svd-avslojar-kaplan-jamforde-israeler-med-nazister/om/kaplans-avgang>

⁴ Bevelander, Peter; Hjerm, Mikael; and Kiiskinen, Jenny. “The Religious Affiliation and Antisemitism of Secondary School Swedish Youths: A Statistical Analysis of Data from 2003 and 2009.” 2013. Malmö University Working Paper Series No. 13.1. Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM), Malmö University.

and Sweden was among the most welcoming, accepting an estimated 163,000 migrants including some 35,000 unaccompanied minors. Since many of these newly arriving migrants come from countries where hostile views of Jews and Israel—and of Western values more generally—are commonplace, authorities are concerned with what educational efforts can be mounted to help reshape these views. In the meantime, Jewish leaders fear that they will see a further increase in antisemitic incidents as a result.

Government and Civil Society Initiatives to Combat Antisemitism

Living History Forum

Sweden's Living History Forum (cited above) is a government-supported center that owes its origins to the initiative of Swedish Prime Minister Hans Göran Persson in 2003. The Forum noted that a survey among Swedish youth in the 1990s found that some 19 percent doubted the veracity of the Holocaust. Taking note of this and the wave of right wing extremism that had been observed in the country, he believed that teaching about the Holocaust would address the history vacuum and also serve as a means to promote tolerance and democratic values in the country. Through research, exhibitions, teacher seminars, surveys, podcasts and web-based materials the Forum focuses on issues of democracy, tolerance, and human rights and draws from the historical experience of the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity, including most recently Communist repression, for this work. In its first years, it produced and distributed to all Swedish households, the book, *Tell Ye Your Children*, a concise history of the Holocaust in Europe. The book has since been revised to include a significant section on the Holocaust in Sweden. (Although a neutral country during World War II, Sweden was not without blemish.) As valuable as these multiple approaches surely are in the fight against antisemitism and intolerance, the Forum professionals still admit to their own uncertainty of their effectiveness. One said that it is a “black box” when it comes to knowing this.

One of the concerns raised by the Forum is the presence of antisemitic lyrics in the music of some popular Hip Hop artists in Sweden. This is something that students do not see, they said, if their education lacks the necessary reference points.

In the Living History Forum survey of attitudes among secondary school students from 2009-2010 results for religion and other background factors were presented. According to the results 18.6 % of all students had a negative attitude towards Jews. 15 % of students with a “Swedish national background” and 37 % of students with a “foreign national background” had a negative attitude. Regarding religious identity, 12 % of students who identified as Christians/Swedish Church, 26 % of those identifying with other Christian denominations, and 55 % of those who identified as Muslims had a negative attitude towards Jews.⁵ Unfortunately, the more recent survey does not provide a similar breakdown on attitudes based on these religious affiliations, so it is not possible to draw clear conclusions on

<https://www.mah.se/upload/Forskningscentrum/MIM/Publications/WPS%2013.1%20Bevelander%20et%20al%202013.pdf>

⁵ “Den Mangtydiga Intoleransen-en studie av gymnasieungdomars attityder I läsåret 2009/2010.” Rapportserie 1:2010. Forum för levande historia, Nov. 2010.

http://www.levandehistoria.se/sites/default/files/material_file/den-mangtydiga-intoleransen-rapport.pdf

whether these attitudes have worsened or improved in the intervening years. In the course of my discussions with the professional staff of the Forum, concern was expressed about not “stigmatizing” any particular group in the process of measuring the levels of antisemitism, so perhaps this was a factor in the redesign of the survey.

Ministry for Culture and Democracy

Government support for ethnic and religious communities is centered in the Ministry for Culture and Democracy. Minister Alice Bah Kuhnke herself has direct and frequent exchanges with the leaders of these communities. She cites the words of the Prime Minister in stating that, “Islamophobia, racism, antisemitism, and Afrophobia have no place in Swedish society.” She is personally aware of the security concerns of the Jewish Community including those at the Stockholm Jewish school and community center. The Ministry provides some funding for all communities and faith-based organizations, and this includes support to the Jewish Youth Association of Sweden.

Although our meetings did not include representatives of the Interior Ministry, Minister Bah Kuhnke spoke of the importance of accurately reporting hate crimes and the need for coordination and cooperation among police, prosecutors and civil society representatives. Since 2016 represents only the second year in office of this government, a national plan of action on combating racism and hate crimes is only now being drafted, but she said the expectations for delivering this plan are high.

We also learned of a special initiative underway in Malmö, where the Jewish Community is planning to hire a new rabbi who would have as his primary responsibility engagement in interreligious activities and especially in the area of Muslim-Jewish relations. This project will be underwritten by the Ministry for Culture and Democracy.

National Coordinator against Violent Extremism

Sweden was among the first European countries to recognize that it needed a comprehensive approach to combating the threat of violent extremism. Its concerns encompass both the dangers coming from right wing extremists and from more recent radical Islamists. The work of the National Coordinator seeks to go beyond the immediate and obvious challenges to police and security professionals and devise new preventive tools. This entails raising awareness in society and on the part of the 290 municipalities with whom they work. They see a particular importance in drawing in social workers, schools and civil society groups in their preventative efforts.

As in other countries, Sweden is concerned about the security implications of an estimated 300 Swedish foreign fighters who left to join ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq and have now returned home. Officials are also mindful of the possibility that other Swedish residents who hold sympathies for the Islamic State may become radicalized in place. One pilot project focuses on local cooperation in what are called “knowledge houses” which have been developed in four Swedish cities. These are places that include both social workers and police and can offer advice and assistance to those—usually teachers or

parents—who are witness to unusual behavior that may indicate radicalization. One-third of the calls that are received by their national help line come from teachers.

Malmö City Officials

Officials describe Malmö as a “global city,” pointing out that of its 323,000 residents, 102,000 are foreign born. If one includes their children, then they would account for fully half of the city’s population. They point to various waves of immigration over the decades—Latin Americans, ex-Yugoslavs, Africans, and most recently 11,400 Iraqis and Syrians who arrived between 2014 and 2015. Nearly all of these recent refugees who have come to Sweden know Malmö as the point of entry. While the goal has been for them to move on quickly to other cities for resettlement, they may instead find themselves staying in Malmö for many weeks requiring the city to care for them and to provide schooling for the children among them. While Sweden has taken in 168,000 refugees, the country was only prepared to absorb some 70,000-80,000. By way of example, in 2013, Malmö was responsible for slightly more than 800 refugees, but in 2015 that number had ballooned to some 13,000. Officials also noted that some 10,000 migrants who were ultimately denied asylum have nevertheless remained in the country “underground.”

They are aware of the special security concerns of the local Jewish Community (noted above) and report that there is today operational and tactical cooperation with local police. However, when asked about the relationship between the Jewish Community and national police and intelligence officials especially with regard to terrorist threats, one city official expressed frustration at the lack of information that even their own police receive.

As one of the country’s official minorities, the Jewish Community should also benefit from a local action plan in the city for these groups. This includes promoting increased visibility at public events and financial support to maintain and develop minority cultures.

Considering the diverse makeup of the city, the large number of immigrants and the relatively high level of unemployment (14.7 percent) authorities are aware of the special educational challenges they face. One initiative that has been praised by the Jewish Community is a project titled, “Legacy of Memory,” which includes the publication of the personal testimonies of former Jewish refugees from the Holocaust and World War II who settled in Malmö, which is intended to serve as an educational tool for teachers in the city. It is a supplemental and voluntary part of the curriculum, although Jewish leaders hope it will be made a requirement. A second education initiative established in 2012 and undertaken by the Jewish Community with Muslim partners draws on the network “Coexist,” and it pairs Jews and Muslims for classroom presentations. Another initiative called the Ice House Foundation originally brought together Muslim and skinhead youth and has since added programs linking Muslim and Jewish youth in the city. With its small Jewish population (a membership of 400-500 with an estimated total population of 1500), many of the city’s residents have no personal knowledge of Jews, making such educational initiatives all the more important.

Swedish Committee against Antisemitism

The Swedish Committee against Antisemitism is an independent information and advocacy organization that monitors racist and antisemitic developments in Swedish society. In recent years it has received government funding to underwrite study trips to Holocaust sites in Eastern Europe for some 800-900 Swedish teachers and students as one means of combating antisemitism. However, at the time of our visit it was not yet decided if the new government would continue to support the project.

Order of the Teaspoon Foundation

A small, private foundation, "Order of the Teaspoon," was established ten years ago. It draws its name and inspiration from the publication of a book by the Israeli author, Amos Oz, titled, "How to Cure a Fanatic." In it, Oz described how everyone could contribute to fighting a fire if only with a single teaspoon of water. The Foundation's motto is, "together for diversity and tolerance," and it has pioneered some novel approaches to meet this goal. One is the publication of a children's book by well-known author and illustrator Pernilla Stalfelt, titled, "*Who are you? A book about tolerance,*" published in Swedish, English and Arabic and distributed to all nine year old children in the country. Another initiative involves working with local municipalities in educational programs to combat intolerance which, the Foundation maintains, has resulted in a measurable decrease in graffiti and related acts of vandalism, thus providing a cost incentive approach for city authorities to engage with it. The Foundation has managed to draw notable individuals from the business and cultural world to serve on its board, which also extends its reach and reputation.

Comments and Recommendations

- Security concerns remain a high priority for the Jewish community, and attention remains focused on the possibility of terrorist attacks. One young Jewish leader said if a Copenhagen-like attack occurred in Stockholm she thought many people would decide to leave the country. As noted in the beginning of this report, the Swedish Government has significantly stepped up its support in this area, but there is still more to be done.
- Recognizing its special importance to Stockholm Jewish life, funding for the necessary security enhancements of the new community school and center should be forthcoming, without the limitations that are otherwise imposed on individual buildings.
- The importance of cooperation and communication between and among local and national police, intelligence services and Jewish community security professionals cannot be understated. Noting the criticisms (even from city authorities in Malmö) greater effort should be made to improve this.
- Sweden was among the first European countries to develop programs to address the dangers of radicalization on the part of both citizens and immigrants as carried out by the National Coordinator against Violent Extremism. These should serve as a compliment to the security measures identified above.

- Sweden should be commended for its humanitarian instincts that have led it to welcome refugees from conflict areas, even as other countries have shut their doors. But this also brings with it new challenges. Many of them come from countries where anti-Jewish and anti-Israel animus is widespread. In the process of absorbing and educating them—including large numbers of unaccompanied minors—special attention should be given to confronting and correcting antisemitic attitudes.
- Understanding the sources of antisemitic incidents is certainly key to devising strategies to combat them. BRÄ does an excellent job of collecting data on antisemitic incidents in Sweden. By admission of its own staff—as expressed on this visit and a previous one—it could also provide information on the perpetrators of these crimes. While this information might not have the same specificity as data about hate crime victims, it could offer insight into the general sources and trends about antisemitic crime, which would surely be helpful to policy makers and civil society alike.
- The surveys undertaken by the Living History Forum have provided important data on the attitudes of young adults in Sweden, and the simplified presentation of former reports offered the ability to discern differences based on religious identity, for example. The most recent survey model makes it more difficult to discern these differences and nearly impossible to see how attitudes have changed when compared to earlier polling. This does a disservice to those who would seek to develop educational programs targeting those segments of the student population most in need of them.
- There are a number of specific educational projects in the schools and with the general public that should be cited as deserving of continued governmental support. These include the Legacy Program in Malmö which seeks to use the testimony of Jewish Holocaust survivors to reach the children of new immigrants; the Coexist program which brings teams of young Jews and Muslims into the classroom; and the training of teachers by the Swedish Committee against Antisemitism through visits to Holocaust sites.
- Special mention should be made of the outreach and engagement efforts of the Ministry of Culture and Democracy in its ongoing dialogue with the Jewish Community and its support for initiatives such as a rabbi for Malmö dedicated to interfaith relations.
- Efforts to further restrict or ban altogether the practice of ritual circumcision are present in Sweden as well as in a number of other European countries. They should be seen as running contrary to the basic principles of freedom of religion and belief which should protect this ritual that is so important to both Jews and Muslims. The Swedish Government should assist in protecting these rights.
- Swedish political leadership has often been harshly critical of the policies of the State of Israel. Criticism of Israel per se is not anti-Semitic, although the Working Definition of Antisemitism as adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in May 2016 can be a helpful tool. It is unfortunate that the Swedish Jewish Community is sometimes conflated with Israel and held responsible for its actions. Swedish authorities should acknowledge that this is unacceptable and do all in its power to prevent this from happening.

List of Meetings

Willy Silberstein and Dr. Henrik Bachner, Swedish Committee against Antisemitism (SCAA)

Mikael Kamras and Camilla Nagler, Order of the Teaspoon foundation

Aron Verständig, Council of Swedish Jewish communities

Nina Tojzner and Petra Kahn Nordh, Jewish Youth Association

Martin Mörk, Deputy Discrimination Ombudsman, Office of the Equity Ombudsman

Ingrid Lomfors, Eva Fried, Dr. Erik Lundberg, Oscar Österberg and Karin Kvist Geverts, Living History Forum

Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy

Ms. Sofia Axell, Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ)

Eva Birgitta Ohlsson, MP Riksdag

Hillevi Engström, Swedish National Coordinator against Violent Extremism

Ms. Annika Söder, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Dr. Joachim Bergström, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Daniel Poohl and Jonathan Leman, Expo Foundation

Jonas Hult, Anders Malmstrom, Tom Roodro and Johanna Sjowall, City of Malmö

Freddy Gellberg, Jewish Community Malmö

REPORT OF DR. BÜLENT ŞENAY

Introduction

This report presents a brief review of the anti-Muslim intolerance and discrimination in Sweden. It is based on meetings with representatives of the Swedish Muslim community (the Swedish Muslim Council, the Muslim Human Rights Committee, the Swedish Muslims for Peace and Justice, the Afro-Swedish National Association, the Ibn Rushd Study Association, the United Islamic Association in Sweden), relevant government Departments (the Equality Ombudsman, the Minister for Culture and Democracy, the Swedish National

Council for Crime Prevention Swedish National Coordination against Violent Extremism, the State Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs), and Swedish academics (Simon Sorgenfrei, David Thurfjell, and Jenny Berglund) whose works are known to deal with the Muslim community in Sweden. In addition to these consultations and conversations, the report also draws on several written sources such as ODIHR reports, Swedish newspapers, and the 2016 SETA European Islamophobia Report 2016.

In the last 15 years, the threat of Muslim violent extremists emerging within Western countries has grown. Terrorist organizations based in the Middle East are recruiting young Muslims in the United States and Europe via social media. Research into the psychology of terrorism suggests that a person's cultural identity plays a key role in extremism. Various research findings suggest that immigrants who identify with neither their heritage culture nor the culture they are living in feel marginalized and insignificant. Experiences of discrimination make the situation worse and lead to greater support for extremism, which promises a sense of meaning and life purpose. Such insights could be of use to policymakers engaged in efforts against violent extremism, including terrorism.

Overall situation in Sweden

Against this general background, negative and/or discriminating trends towards Islam and Muslims in Sweden are generally evident in every aspect of society included in this report: media, legal, political, and school systems, labor market and public attitudes. The Swedish Discrimination Act of 2009 prohibits discrimination in a wide range of areas and provides opportunities for those affected by discrimination to claim redress. But despite this strong legal protection, numerous reports have demonstrated that the application of the law in many cases is flawed. Roma, Muslims, African Swedes and people with physical and mental disabilities continue to face systematic discrimination in many areas of society. 47% of Swedes feel negative about religious diversity in society. Studies of attitudes towards Muslims in Sweden have demonstrated that attitudes based on intolerance and discrimination against Muslims are evident throughout the country. Negative attitudes towards the Islamic headscarf are more common; 64.4 % of the Swedish population believes Muslim women are oppressed. The tolerance of Muslim coverings in public spaces has, however, increased overall. Swedes have different attitudes towards different forms of covering; around 83% are against the niqab and burka, but 65% accept the hijab.

Nevertheless, given the current globalised information age and the impact of incidents such as the attacks of November 2015 in Paris, attitude surveys need to be constantly updated and trends need to be monitored. Recent events, such as the Paris attacks and the military and political actions undertaken as a response, or the on-going refugee crisis, need to be factored into contemporary attempts to analyse and understand intolerance and discrimination against Muslims not only in Sweden, but globally. Despite this, it is not easy to map and quantify Anti-Muslim discrimination and hate-crimes. The primary issue is the lack of sufficient data-collection and police-recordings. We understand from our conversations and interviews with the relevant parties that majority data are based on ethnicity or race, and not on religion.

It is also clear that the Swedish government is well aware of the problem and recognizes that intolerance and discrimination against Muslims strongly exists in society, politics and the media. Based on the information provided to us, we can say that the question is how much the government and civil actors engage in combating anti-Muslim discrimination and hate discourse as well as hate crimes.

As Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, while I appreciate that the Swedish government is willing to engage in combating discrimination against Muslims by acknowledging the reality of the phenomenon, what is actually being done is entirely insufficient. For example, some of the leading anti-racist Swedish scholars protested against the government's New Research Center against Racism. They argued that the Government's Center has the wrong approach to racism, seeing it as mainly a phenomenon that has to do with individual actors' conscious behaviors rather than as having to do with structures.

Also, we learned during our visits that the government adopted a national plan against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime on 24 November 2016. The overarching objective of the plan is strategic, effective and coherent work to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime in Sweden. The plan sets out a structure for coordination and follow-up which lays the groundwork for longterm strategic work. Different forms of racism are highlighted in the plan and targeted measures against the different forms of racism, e.g. islamophobia, are included in the plan. The plan is to form a basis and a focus for work to combat racism and hate crime in the particularly important strategic areas identified by the Government. The strategic areas are: Improved coordination and monitoring; more knowledge, education and research; civil society: greater support and more in-depth dialogue; strengthening preventive measures online; and a more active legal system. However, it is important to recall Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke's statement from the protest against intolerance and discrimination against Muslims mentioned earlier. In 2015, minister Kuhnke said that the government is planning to adopt a strategy on inter alia combating Islamophobia (the term is used by the Minister) Our visit to the Ministry was much informing. The Minister was very welcoming and open hearted in cooperating with the OSCE Personal Representatives. It is noted that the NGOs asked the Minister Alice Bah Kuhnke for social integration what she would do to tackle structural anti-Muslim discrimination.

Hate-crime reporting

Sweden regularly reports official hate crime data to ODIHR. Official hate crime data are collected by the National Council for Crime Prevention and are based on information from the police and the prosecution authority. Since 2012, the number of hate crime cases has been estimated based on a statistical sample of police reports. Hate crime reports are published annually. Victimization surveys, used to measure unreported crime, are also conducted annually. But none of these reports provide specific data on hate crimes against Muslims. Sweden has not cooperated with ODIHR on the existing program of hate crime training either for police officers (TAHCLE) or for prosecutors (PAHCT). Swedish civil society organizations have not sent submissions to ODIHR on hate crimes with anti-Muslim bias.

Sweden BRÅ shows that between 2010 and 2014 reports of hate-crimes with an identified anti-Muslim motivation have increased by 81%. Methodologically however, due to overlaps with other phenomena, crimes against Muslims are difficult to capture statistically (SST 2014, 22-23). Data for 2015 is not yet available from BRÅ.

Acts of vandalism and violence

Mosques and Muslim prayer-facilities throughout Sweden have also faced violence that has anti-Muslim motivation (assumed or confirmed). They have been vandalised or been subject to arson and these attacks are an on-going trend. Examples of this can be found from the very beginning of the year 2016. In January alone, the Gothenburg Mosque received a bomb threat, a mosque in Uppsala was attacked with a firebomb (SVT 2015), a mosque in the small town of Järva was threatened by mail, including pornographic images. and a masjid in Mariestad was attacked with canned pork. In February, the imam of the Stockholm Mosque and his family faced death threats (Salö 2015).

Parallel to these damages are the attacks and incidents involving asylum housing. By October 2015, around 20 fire-related incidents, suspected to be arson by the police, have taken place. By December, the number increased to 50. According to the Swedish Ministry of Justice, the Swedish Police has informed that according to the sentences handed down by national courts that the Department of National Operations is aware of, the most common case is that the perpetrator is one of the asylum housing residents. In no known sentence has the crime been considered a hate-crime.

Another important incident was the attack in Trollhättan where a masked 21-year old entered a primary school and stabbed two students and a teacher who were of a Muslim cultural background. The 21-year old, named Anton Lundin Petterson, who was said to have had far-right sympathies, was later shot dead by the police. Peter Adlersson, the spokesperson for the West-Swedish police, stated that the police are convinced the 21-year old's motives were racist, and that he had selected his victims (although it remains unclear under what criteria this was done or if Anton knew the victims were of a Muslim cultural background). This analysis is not uncommon.

Job and labor market discrimination

Discrimination on the job and labour market has been researched in Sweden for some time. Research has indicated that employers tend to refrain from hiring those who are perceived to be non-European, Muslim or Jewish. Agerström, Carlsson and Rooth were interested in explicit and implicit prejudice towards Muslim men. Their study, based mostly on association-tests, concluded that 49% of employers had explicit and 94% had implicit prejudice towards Muslim men. These prejudices are believed to have an impact upon employers' decisions to hire.

In general, Swedish Muslims in Cooperation Network Alternative Report (SMCNAR) concludes that figures from the Municipality in Stockholm suggest 'there is an alarming amount of discrimination against Muslims in the labour market' (2013, 29). SMCNAR mentions a case handled by the Equality Ombudsman where a Muslim man's refusal to

shake the hands of women was seen as lack of cooperation by the Swedish Unemployment Office, who consequently kicked him out of one of its employment programs. The court ruled in favour of the man in question. According to comments received from the office of the Equality Ombudsman, the conclusions of the report stem from the researchers drafting the report and not from the Equality Ombudsman. This means that it would be more correct to say that according to the conclusions in a report commissioned by the Equality Ombudsman, the extent of research on Islamophobia is insufficient with respect to many areas of society. Notably, the researchers concluded, there is a lack of comparative studies, which in turn makes it difficult to draw conclusions on a more general level. Still, existing research in Sweden does unanimously demonstrate the presence of Islamophobia in several areas of society.

Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in education

It is also matter of concern that there is a pattern of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in the curricula, textbooks and other educational materials. There is little information available about racism and intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in the Swedish education system and the teaching materials used. EXPO's recent report finds that both school staff and teaching materials are deficient in avoiding discrimination and stereotypes. In an early study, Härenstam contended that the picture of a militaristic Islam which is often depicted in textbooks used for teaching civics and social sciences can create a barrier for students in dealing with intolerance and xenophobia, even though dealing with these phenomena is part of the Swedish curricula and intended learning outcome. EXPO's representative holds that the Swedish schools have failed to fulfill the claim that the Swedish curriculum is a neutral place which forwards critical thinking.

The people interviewed for this report held a parallel view to that expressed in the academic research. All interviewees said that Islam is given a negative image and that stereotypes and generalisations are common in schoolbooks. For example, EXPO referred to a book (which has now been taken off the shelves) which had a picture of a 'Muslim' - a woman in a bomb-belt. In addition, Islam is, according to Ibn Rushd, not taught as part of the Swedish landscape, but as something different and 'foreign'. The informant from GHRC argued that there is an absence of the complex history of Islam as a civilisation; instead, the focus is on explanations of Islam which confirm stereotypes. Two of the informants (EXPO and GHRC) also voiced concern over the way these schoolbooks depict Sweden and Swedes - as the epitome and yardstick of 'goodness'. These informants criticised the Eurocentric approach to Sweden's own history where Sweden's relationship to slavery, colonialism and Sweden's minorities take the backseat.

Given the present levels of globalisation, Sweden, like other countries, is not exempt from the impact of foreign events. The civil wars in Syria and Iraq, the on-going refugee crisis, the attack on Charlie Hebdo and the recent Paris events are some of the events most frequently reported. In many ways, these events, directly or indirectly, concern or are related to Islam and/or Muslims. More domestically, issues relating to the burning of mosques, the burning of refugee camps and the school attack in Trollhättan in October 2015 show direct or indirect connections to racism, and especially to intolerance and discrimination against

Muslims. The media reporting on these and similar issues has raised concerns about the way Muslims and Islam are represented in the Swedish media.

The Judiciary

There are no current laws or regulations in Sweden that explicitly target Muslims on grounds of being Muslim. However, the Muslim civil society has voiced serious criticism towards the Anti-Terrorism Act (2003) adopted in Sweden. SMCNAR (2013) criticises the 2003 act for being too vague on its definition of terrorism, and also for being too broad in defining conduct that can be charged under the act. Muslim civil society argues that the relationship between anti-Muslim sentiment and the act becomes clearer in its practical application. All those indicted under the act so far have been Muslim, which strengthens the Muslim civil society's perception that the act is 'designed' to target Muslims specifically. The report demonstrates that the burden of proof in these cases seems to be substantially lower than under other charges which might lead to jail-time for the defendant. This brings the function and drafting of the law into question.

The justice system as an institution has been criticised by other sources as well. BRÅ conducted a study that aimed to identify and map discrimination in the Swedish justice system - Diskriminering i Rättsprocessen; according to this, Muslims are less likely to receive an objective treatment, especially in criminal cases. Informants to the study expressed that there is a tendency to distrust Muslim suspects, especially if they are men. The study found that stereotypes against Muslims are present throughout all instances of the Swedish justice system.

Internet, papers and social media

Internet and social media online have had a hand in spreading and accelerating prejudice towards Islam and Muslims. The Living History Forum, a Swedish government body that works on discrimination, tolerance and human rights, writes that 'perhaps the biggest problem when it comes to spreading anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism happens through internet and social media'. Overall, the impact of cyber-space seems to be regarded as serious in Sweden, with political and societal consequences.

The increase in manifestations of intolerance against Muslims in public discourse, media and on the Internet is also worrying. The government should publicly clarify what initiatives are taken to respond to these manifestations, especially in the context of the terror attacks and the refugee and migrant situation in Europe.

Politics

Political climate has become more anti-Muslim with the right-wing 'Christian' populists. The Government should publicly clarify what steps are taken to counter the anti-Muslim far right discourse, including the perpetuation of hate and stereotypes online. The space for Muslims has been decreasing in politics while the sense of hopelessness has been increasing. The last incident from the Green Party in which there was a case that boys and girls should be

together during PE classes in Muslim religious schools even if this has been a standard practice in public schools.

As for the foreign politics, Muslim community representatives believe that the issue of Israel and Palestine relations is not about Jews but about relationship and treatment of Palestine by Israelis. However, according to our interviewees, some Muslim criticism against Israel is presented as anti-semitism and therefore this is used against Muslims in the media which provokes more anti-Muslim prejudice. They also believe that it is necessary to do awareness-raising. The Minister of Culture, Alice Ba was talking about adopting a strategy on combating Islamophobia (the term is used by the Minister). There is an issue of Muslim security. Many Muslims are not so well off economically and there is a need to say the story of who Muslims really are.

Social services/children

According to a report from the Swedish National Board for health and welfare (Individ och familjeomsorg – lägesrapport 2016, p. 13) 32.000 children were placed under mandatory care under The Care of Young Persons Act in 2013. Foreign born children made up 20 per cent of these children which is an overrepresentation. According to our Muslim interviewees, in many cases, social services are taking children arbitrarily from parents. In their perception, social services can take children with no evidence of maltreatment. In most cases, courts support their decisions. Religious practices of the family are not taken into consideration when a child is placed in foster care. There is often no reunion until children are 18. Social services have a high degree of discretion. This is a common perception in the Swedish Muslim community and needs to be addressed.

According to Government sources, this is a misconception that needs to be clarified. In Sweden, children and young people up to 20 years of age are entitled by law to receive societal care if needed. Instances where societal care is generally considered needed include those in which children and young people are experiencing severe difficulties related to drug addiction or violence at home, disability of the child, or where a parent is facing other exceptionally special individual circumstances that put the well-being of the child at risk. Societal care can also be provided in cases relating to the “risk-behaviour” of young people, generally with regard to self-harming activities such as drug use or other anti-social behaviour. Additionally, unaccompanied refugee children who require accommodation and guidance from a guardian in order to acclimatize have been designated a new target group for societal care. The National Agency for Health and Welfare compiles statistics on the provision of societal support for children and young people on a regular basis. These statistics keep record of those with a social security number and accounts for gender, age, and national origin (i.e. if they are born in Sweden or abroad). Keeping record of religious affiliation is not allowed in Sweden. The latest compilation of statistics is from 2014, during which more than 22,300 children and young people were at some point afforded some type of societal care. Approximately 7,000 of these were placed in care under the terms of both the Social Services Act (SoL) and the Care of Young Persons Act (special provisions act, LVU). Among these, 2,600 were placed into care solely through the direct application of LVU. According to the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, most of these were placed in so-called family homes, which can be provided by relatives as well as

by the state. The proportion of children and young people placed into societal care under LVU that are foreign-born is one fifth of the total number. This means that this group is proportionally overrepresented in relation to those born in Sweden. Boys in the age of 15-20 years make up the majority of foreign-born persons placed into societal care under LVU. During 2015, approximately 35,000 unaccompanied refugee children came to Sweden. No further statistics are available for this period as of yet.

Unfortunately, Sweden does not gather data on the race or ethnicity and religious affiliation of these children. Our interviewees expressed their strong suspicion that a majority of children placed under mandatory care are non-white, and most of them are from Muslim families. In an increasingly anti-Muslim and anti-migrant society, Islam especially is seen as `opposed` to Western values, and therefore `practicing Muslim parents` are at a disadvantage in many ways. All our interviewees underlined the same problem. There is a widespread `issue` in the Muslim community that many children are taken by the social services. However this can never be more than a suspicion until it is actually verified by means of gathering equality data.

Crime Convictions based on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims

According to Muslim community representatives, there is no action plan to address hate crimes. The issue of hate crime for Muslim women is present. One representative in Stockholm mentioned hate crimes targeting mosques. She added that Jewish community is allocated 4 million Swedish crowns and there are other resources to protect Jewish communities and they do not need to apply for these resources. She noted that there is a need to have a center for protection or a place where it would be possible to file complaints for hate crimes. Muslim women generally do not report cases. Police has hate crime units in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. There are 1,200 cases that deal with Afrophobia. It is necessary to make it easier to collect hate crime data. Their suggestion is to build a center that provides some kind of impunity if nothing happens. Police does not recognize hate crime cases. They organized some training activities but there was no collaboration with the community. There is Forum for Equal Rights – they have to work with everyone else. In her view, Muslims in Sweden are looking for a plan B as they do not foresee a bright future for themselves. This is also a matter of perception. The government can certainly argue that it has an action plan against hate crimes. The hate crime units in Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm are part of that plan. But of course for the actual people who are targeted by hate crimes this is grossly inadequate. It is clear that Muslim community overall seem to be suspicious of about if the government's efforts can really be called an action plan. There is also a problem of `underreported hate crime`. Muslim community representatives do not see any concrete efforts on the side of the government to support initiatives that will increase the reporting of hate crime.

It is noted that the NGOs asked the Minister Alice BA for social integration what she would do to tackle structural discrimination. Discrimination Ombudsperson and Anti-Discrimination Bureau does not take complaints, but rather produce monitoring reports on seven grounds of discrimination: ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, race.

Overall speaking, it is significantly concerning that there is a high level of discrepancy between the number of arrests and the number of convictions in regard to the Muslims. According to the statistics presented by Swedish Public Service Televisions webpage, 26 people were detained under the new terrorism legislation between 2003 and 2007. But it only led to two convictions in the end which is very low by Swedish standards. Generally when a person is detained it leads to a conviction. All of the detained people were Muslims and 24 of them were found to be innocent. And the two convictions led to strong criticism from among others the Swedish bar association who thought that the two men were not given a fair trial. It is important that principles of necessity and proportionality are strictly observed in this sense.

Swedish Academia and Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims

There are very few academics who spoke out against anti-Muslim discourse. Academia is heavily divided on the issue of intolerance against Muslims. There are experts on terrorism – these are loud voices. Most others are not involved in political issues and they seem voiceless. Matthias Gideli from the Gothenburg University, for example, has been ostracized by the media. He looks at it from an integration perspective and is not as effective.

It is noted that there is a change of rhetoric towards more anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim attitudes in the parliament and that most intolerance against Muslims is present in the south of Sweden.

Conclusion

The primary responsibility for addressing acts of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims rests with States. This can include promoting and facilitating open and transparent interfaith and intercultural dialogue and partnerships towards tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, fighting prejudice, disaffection and marginalization. Yet it is our understanding that it is also the Muslim community that should take responsibility to engage fully within the majority society. Their participation in social and political life through, inter alia, representative organisations, is very relevant. International developments or political issues can never justify intolerance and discrimination, including against Muslims.

All forms of terrorism must be strongly condemned. The identification of terrorism and extremism with Islam and Muslims has to be firmly rejected. Law enforcement is an essential tool to combat crimes and violent manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, including against Muslims.

An enabling environment and opportunities should be created for the youth to participate and engage voluntarily and freely in public life and the promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democratic principles, the rule of law, tolerance, nondiscrimination, dialogue, mutual respect and understanding, and to facilitate their access to social services. Youth who are willing to contribute to such efforts should be supported through education in schools and higher education institutions;

17 Muslim civil society organizations in Sweden prepared a report in response to the Swedish Government's 19th, 20th and 21st report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, from February 2013. Below are a few selected and significant recommendations that our country visit has confirmed:

The many cases of reported negative treatment of Muslims by the Social Services give reason to suspect a pattern of discrimination. The government should therefore take serious an inquiry into the Social Service's conduct in relation to Muslims.

Institutional discrimination, as a product of anti-Muslim attitudes and established practices, is not easily fought with case law only. We therefore recommend that Swedish public authorities be placed under a statutory duty to promote equality and prevent discrimination not only in their role as employers but also in carrying out their functions.

State grants to ethnically based organisations should be raised to levels comparable to those of other organisations with similar missions such as organisations formed to support the LGBT community or for the purpose of supporting national minorities.

An exception clause should be imposed to amend the discriminatory effect of the Animal Welfare Act with regard to religious slaughter so as to comply with EU directives and the European Convention.

The Swedish legal system, which includes lay judges appointed by political parties, should be revised so that Muslims' right to legal certainty and due process is no longer influenced negatively by the fact that politicians active in racist, anti-Muslim parties participate in judgments issued by the courts.

The government through its various branches, such as the Chancellor of Justice, must ensure that media organisations fulfill their obligation to be socially responsible, fair, accurate, thorough, comprehensive, and balanced and that the right to freedom of expression is balanced by respect for the rights and reputations of others. Special attention needs to be paid to the commentary field of Internet media outlets.

The government should also support increased representation of people from culturally diverse backgrounds on the editorial and management positions of public service broadcast media bodies as well as in the presentation of news. To this end, Sweden's Television should lift its discriminatory ban on head scarves for hostesses.

The government should publicly acknowledge that there is a growing problem of racist agitation in Sweden – even in the mainstream – which seeks legitimacy by masquerading as criticism of Islam and that this has clear, material, negative implications for Muslims.

This report suggests that finding ways to help at-risk (into extremism) individuals gain a sense of significance and belonging may be one promising strategy for preventing future security threats in some societies. This before anything else requires a well-articulated public and legal policy against anti-Muslim hate speeches and crimes.

List of Meetings

Fatima Doubakil, Muslim Human Rights Committee

Omera Saleh, Swedish Muslims for Peace and Justice

Kitimbwa Sabuni, Afro-Swedish National Association

Zaynab Ouahabi, Muslim Women Network

Maimuna Abdullahi, Researcher for the National report on the impact on Islamophobia on Muslim Europe in Sweden

Mustafa Tumturk, Swedish Muslim Council

Temmam Asbai, Islamic Association in Sweden

Helena Hummastein, Ibn Rushd Study Association

Martin Mörk is Deputy Ombudsman at the Office of the Equality Ombudsman

Living History Forum

Alice Bah Kunke, Minister for Culture and Democracy

Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ)

Hillevi Engström, Swedish National Coordinator against Violent Extremism

Annika Söder, State Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Joachim Bergström, Special Envoy to combat anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

Daniel Poohl, Editor in Chief and Head, Expo Foundation

Simon Sorgenfrei, Lecturer in Religious Studies at Södertörn University

David Thurfjell

Jenny Berglund, Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer